



# INTRODUCTION TO **Vinyl Cutting**

USING THE WLPL SILHOUETTE CAMEO

# The machine you'll be using!



Meet the **Silhouette Cameo**! It is known as a vinyl cutter, but this compact workhorse can cut many different materials including paper, cardstock, cardboard and even some fabric, making it a great machine for a variety of arts and craft projects.

## Getting Familiar with the Cameo

The Cameo is a very straight forward machine that uses a lot of automated adjustments that you will be setting in the software. So when it comes time to cut, generally you only need to follow the instructions on the Cameo's LED screen to be successful.

All material to be cut is fed through the Cameo on a lightly adhesive cutting mat. This keeps it in place for smooth, precise cuts, enabling this machine to tackle some very detailed patterns - most vinyl decals you see around the library on our doors and walls was cut on the Cameo!

The most common materials to cut on the Cameo are cardstock and vinyl (either adhesive or heat-transfer). Here are some common project ideas!

- Wall / water bottle / car decals (adhesive vinyl)
- T-shirt design (heat-transfer vinyl)
- Greeting cards (cardstock)
- Paint stencil (cardstock or a special stencil material)
- Garlands and wreaths ( cardstock)

# The file you'll need!

You can use virtually any image with a defined silhouette! The easiest to use are black and white images. Some designs are premade to be used in Silhouette Studio, but it's just as easy to find one you want on an image search online.

**Here are some good examples of what to look for in an image:**



Complex designs are okay as long as the edges are clear and the lines of the design itself aren't too thin.

*Cheers*

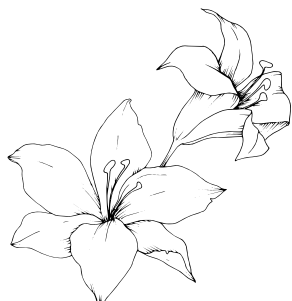
TO THE NEW YEAR



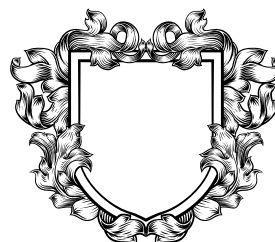
Color is fine as long as the design is nice and defined!



**Here are some images that might not work so well:**



These are a bit too delicate and it would be difficult to weed out the cut material.



Photos just don't work well - they are difficult for the software to trace accurately!



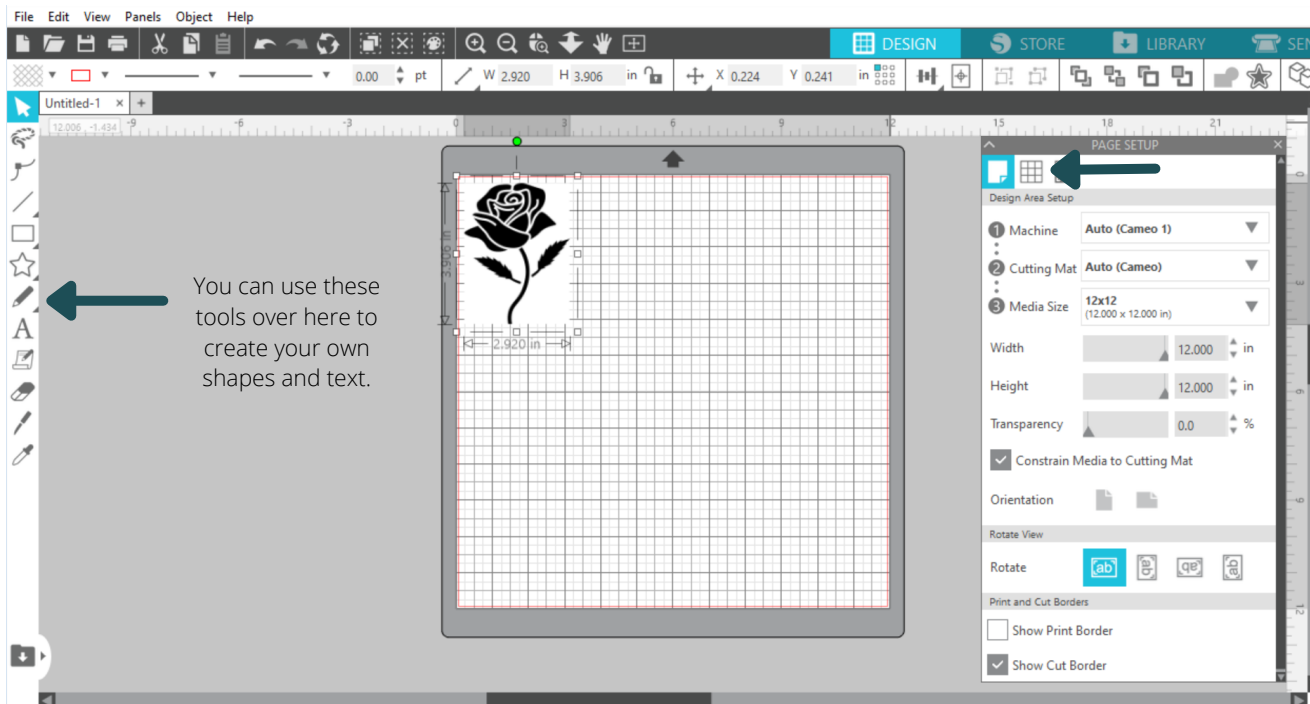
# Creating in Silhouette Studio!



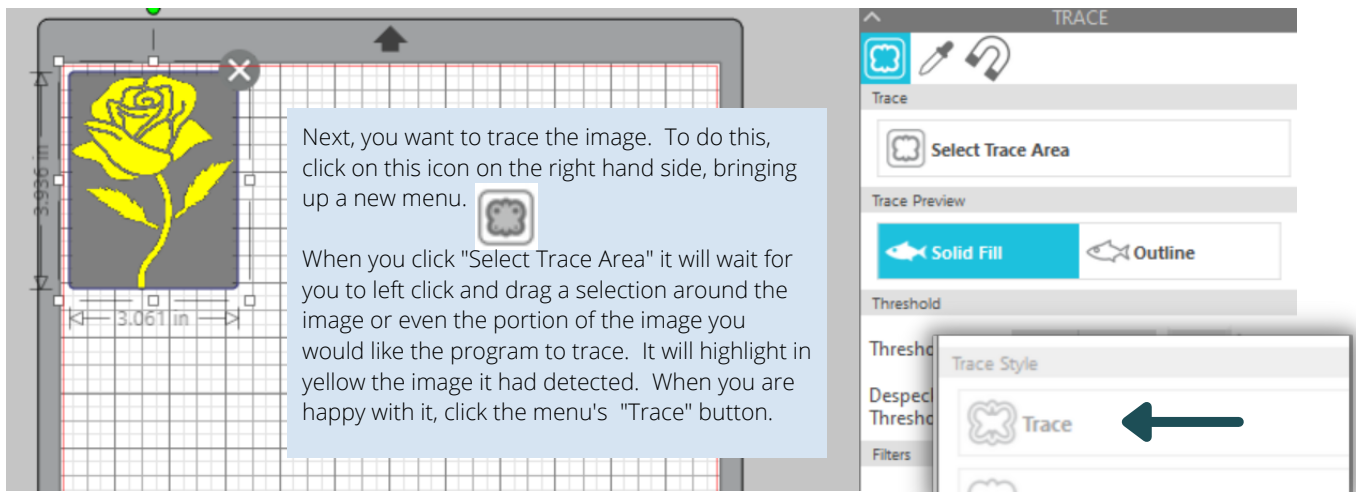
Find the image file you would like to work on that drag the icon on top of the Silhouette Studio icon (shown above). This is the simplest way to open the program with your file already loaded.

You will find that Silhouette Studio also has a user-friendly workspace with simple drag-and-drop editing, but for our purposes, there are going to be a lot of functions you can ignore for now. We'll focus on tracing an image to create a path for the cutter to follow.

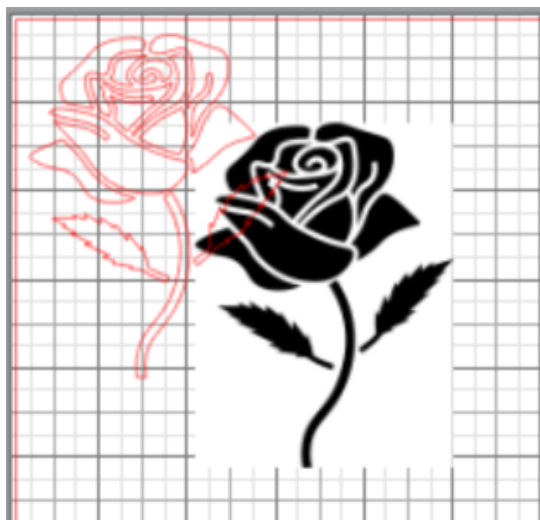
The default settings should show you a 12in x 12in grid. If you don't see the grid lines, you can toggle a checkbox to view them, which is always a good idea when working in Silhouette Studio.



The grid shows you the real proportions of your design on the cutting mat. So you will need to know how big you want your project to be. You can scale the design by clicking and dragging on the corners of the image. Be aware that dragging the sides will result in a distorted image. You can also position your image on the grid by clicking and dragging.

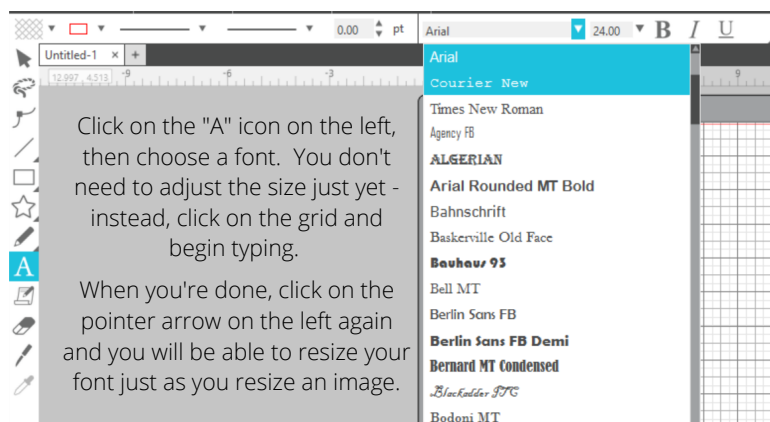






After you have traced the image, you can drag the original away, cleaving the red "cut lines" left on your grid. The original image can be deposited in the gray area around the grid, or you can just delete it.

This design is ready to cut, but we will add some text first.

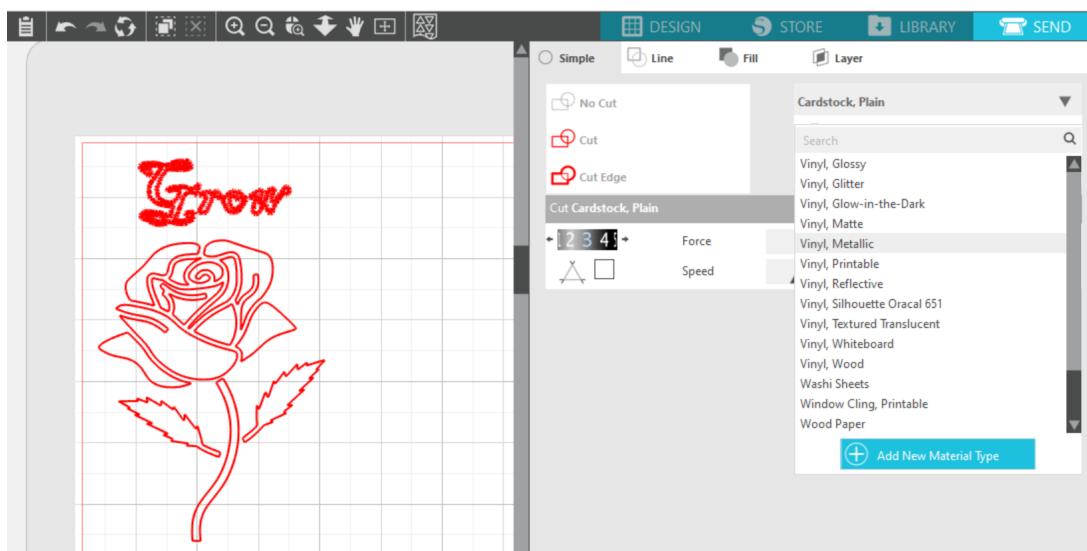
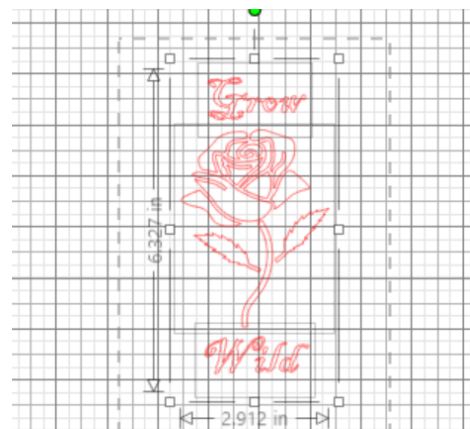


Once you are happy with your design, you will probably want to group all of the components - the image and the text - into one shape. To do this, drag a box around all of the components to select them.

At the top of your workspace this menu will appear:



Click the highlighted icon to group the objects.

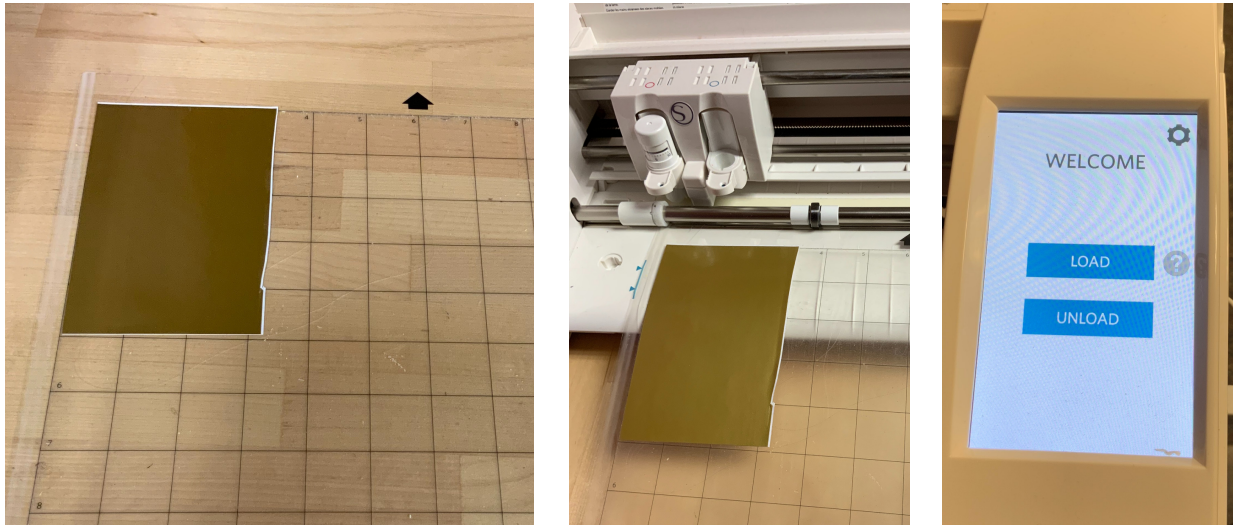


Now you can send your completed design to the Cameo! Click on the "Send" tab up at the very top of your workspace. This will pull up a new window showing you a preview of your design as well as some settings for the Cameo.

In the dropdown menu near the top, select the material you wish to cut. It is always a good idea to have a few scraps of the material to test and make sure the settings are correct. If the first pass doesn't cut all the way through, the blade depth and force can be adjusted in this window.

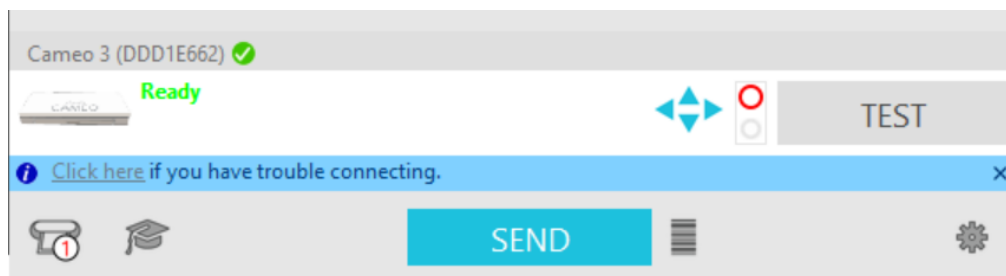
# Now to prep your materials!

Before you send, you want to have your material loaded in the Cameo and ready to go! Fortunately, the Cameo has a very simple set up with the help of its LED screen.



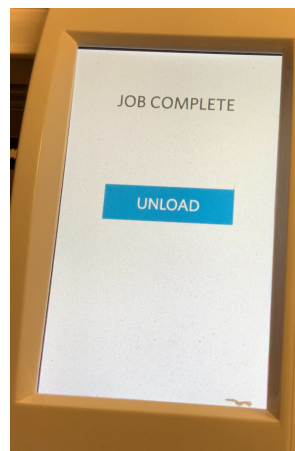
The first step is to place your materials on a cutting mat. When they are new, Silhouette cutting mats are sticky to hold down the material. There are medium bond and light bond mats for vinyl and paper respectively. However, as they get used, the mats will lose some of their stickiness - it's fine for most projects to use a little bit of painter's tape to hold the material down - just examine your design and your material to make sure you are taping in an area that does not need to be cut.

Smooth your material onto the mat so that it lies flat, then line the mat up against the rollers of the Cameo, its left edge lined up with the blue arrows. Then tap the "Load" button on the screen.



Now you can click that "Send" button!

When the Cameo is done cutting, wait until the "Unload" button reappears on the screen. Tap the button and remove the mat when it is fully free of the rollers.



# Weeding, transferring and applying vinyl!



If you are cutting a vinyl decal, there are some tips to make the process go smoothly! The first thing you want to do is weed away all of the excess vinyl so that only your design is left on the backing. Always peel it away with care, making sure you aren't pulling up any shapes you want to keep. This is particularly important with fonts and intricate designs.

It might help to use an x-acto blade to cut the parts you want to weed into smaller sections as you go. Be aware that some vinyl weeds more easily than others.

Be sure to go back and weed out the middles of letters and small bits of negative space you might have missed. Sometimes using a pin helps with this more delicate removal process!



To preserve your decal, apply transfer tape on top - transfer tape is made specifically for this process and is often clear or clear with a grid printed on it to help you keep your design straight when applying it. To secure the decal, burnish with a straight edge like this special tool or a plastic card over the top, helping the decal to adhere to the transfer tape.



To apply your decal, you will do the opposite process!

Very carefully peel away the backing, making sure you have burnished the design enough to stick to the transfer tape instead. When it is all on the transfer tape, carefully apply it to a clean surface (repositioning is not an option!).

Burnish the design again before carefully peeling away the transfer tape.

Done!